

March 1, 2023
Members of the Education Committee
State Capitol Hartford, CT 06106

RE: **SB 1096**

Esteemed Members of the Education Committee,

I speak before you today in support of Senate Bill 1096.

As a democratic society we strive to make decisions based on equity and fairness. There is No equity or fairness based on the current law for opening a public charter school in CT. The process currently in place, is set-up for our public charters to fail in their attempt to open high quality options in communities that desperately need and want them!

Proponents of new charters in Connecticut who want to bring innovative educational models to our state, are subject to navigating a highly stringent process to be considered for approval from our state department of education. The state of Connecticut sets a high bar and I support ensuring schools do right for the kids they want to serve. But we have made this process a political one, and pulled focus from educational goals. And once a school meets the state's rigorous criteria- those approved-are then held in limbo by not receiving the funding parallel to the approval...This gives way to entire communities made up of majority black and latino children in underserved communities-to be held hostage and at the will of political ideology! I fail to see the fairness and equity in that!

Recently I heard folks testify related to charter school supporters being naïve and easily manipulated- I assure you, I am neither. To set the record straight, naïve are those who don't get their facts from reliable source- I suggest those folks get their facts from the state department of education website not from those bent on spreading propaganda based on lies as they try desperately to protect the status quo- dressing it up "as an attack on a public good being in danger". Education is a public good, yes. Why does it matter where we want to send our children to school if you get to choose where your children learn?

Our kids are in danger, their livelihood is in danger- and we will be part of their detriment if we allow ourselves to be divided while our kids keep falling through the cracks.

I am here today standing up for our children, and for all of the wonderful educators and parents who are seeking better for their children. Why should their dreams be deferred? It is the responsibility of this body to enact laws that reflect the will of the people. And across the state there are over 5000 families on waiting lists, and 11,00 students attending existing public charter schools. It is a parent's right to choose a different type of public school for their child. During a hearing last week, non-english speakers who supported charters were treated unfairly on more than one occasion while testifying, made to feel different and less than because they do not speak English and support school choice. Why is this acceptable? This set us back in our fight for civil rights and freedom of speech folks.

In closing, I support SB 1096 because this bill will ensure the approval process for public charter schools is fair by eliminating the two step process, additionally establishing a non-lapsing account in the general fund for approved charters with an appropriate timeline for dispensing said funds.

In other words it will eliminate a broken process currently in place- that hinders and in many cases prevents high quality public charter schools from opening and serving communities that clamor for them!

Thank you for your incredible work and dedication focused on bringing change and opportunity for All of Connecticut's children..let's continue the good work by supporting SB 1096.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Claudia Phillips

Community Engagement Manager

Connecticut Charter Schools Association

